

EU-Georgia Business Council strengthens ties between Georgia and Europe

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A reception was held in the Courtyard Marriott Hotel on April 4 to celebrate the establishment of the EU - Georgian Business Council.

The council started its work on February 3, with the Head Office in Brussels, the heart of EU activities. The EUGBD was founded at the initiative of BP, together with four other groups: BP Exploration (Caspian Sea), Limited Georgia BP Capital V.O.F, Georgian Glass & Mineral Water Co. NV, STATOIL Coordination Centre NV, CANARGO Standard Oil Products Limited.

EUGBC is non-profit association aiming to facilitate investment and trade between Georgia and EU. It aims to promote Georgia in the EU as a place to invest and do business, and vice versa. The Council will promote and protect the business interests of its members and assist them in considering business opportunities in Georgia. It will also assist Georgian businesses with establishing legitimate business activities in EU. The Council aims to strengthen the ties between businesses, governments and civil society in Georgia and in the EU.

Kote Zaldastanishvili, the Secretary General of the Council announced that the Council is open for cooperation with all companies. Any corporate or non-profit legal entity or individual who is interested in Georgia or intends to have links with Georgia or the EU can become a member of the Council.

"Commercial and non-commercial organizations are able to become members of the Council. I am very much looking forward to working with businesses to promote investment and trade between Georgia and the EU. There are real and exciting opportunities for Georgian companies to break into the EU market, and I will be doing my best to assist them to build business links, solve market access difficulties and overcome regulatory obstacles," said Zaldastanashvili.

Nino Burdjanadze, Chairperson of Georgian Parliament, attended the reception. She pointed out that the establishment of the Council is essential for gaining European investments and improving the business environment in Georgia. According to Burjanadze, parliament is already elaborating a draft, which will provide security for investments. Amendments are also being prepared in tax and customs legislation. Burdjanadze mentioned that the hard situation concerning the export of Georgian wine shows how important and necessary the establishment of the EU-Georgian Council is.

BP supported the EUGBC project with a 300,000USD grant under its BP pledge agreement with the Government of Georgia, signed in October 2004.

"BP believes that wherever we operate, our activities should generate economic benefits and opportunities for an enhanced quality of life for not just those directly affected by our business, but to as wide a part of the population as possible. We believe that the inclusion of Georgia into the European Neighborhood Policy creates new opportunities for promoting EU-Georgia business relationships. Therefore, BP, with the support of the business community and the Government of Georgia, initiated the EUGBC," said Wref Digings BP Georgia Country Manager.

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